

flat out

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THE CLUB FOR ALL LIGHTWEIGHT CARS AND TRICYCLES

Travel to Espagne : que felicidad! - Lilian Scobie and John Rowe

Drivers from England, France, Ireland and Luxembourg made up our cheerful group. 12 cars, one tin-top and 21 folk, in our midst were some of the best mechanics, Jacques and Olivier take a bow, that our wee cars could possibly have! Their expertise was called upon on a few occasions.



It had taken a year in the planning. Still largely undiscovered the northern Spanish region of La Rioja produces some of the country's best wine. The rugged mountains, sparkling rivers, walled medieval villages have allowed time to stand still, a stunning landscape of hills, valleys, and vines. Winding, empty roads perfect for our cars.

An article was put in the 'FlatOut' magazine asking if anyone would be interested in a Spanish driving holiday, the

response wasn't good. Only four UK cars committed. John was ordering parts from Burton Cars and he mentioned trying to organise such a trip. A comment was made to the secretary of the French club K.B.D. (Kitcars, Burton, 2CV Derivatives). Thierry Chevalier contacted us and the holiday suddenly took shape.

Some of the French and Luxembourg cars, met in Pau on the 6th. September. The next day we were taken on a drive through the Pyrenees. If you ever decide to take such a route you need Pierre and Michele Dedenys with you, their knowledge of the area is second to none.

We had a picnic well above Gourette ski station. Not knowing that we were having our horse power checked out!



Our highest point was at Col d'Aubisque at 1709 meters. The roads and views were outstanding. We could have easily loitered here for the full holiday.

The remaining French cars were waiting for us on our return to the hotel. The 8th. saw us travelling again through the Pyrenees,

once more following Pierre's car 'Le Patron', (aptly named as Pierre is the president of the K.B.D. club) on route to Oloron Sainte Marie and the vallee d'Aspe.



After a stop for coffee and watching the hang gliders above Accous we took the road to Saint Jean Pied de Porte.



Our picnic stop felt like we were on top of the world.

The next stop was in the Roncevaux Pass where there were other vehicles parked admiring the view, until we arrived and their admiration turned to the cars.



From here we travelled down to Pamplona, onward to Logroño, which was our stop for the night.

The hotel had warned us of road works, but luckily enough our small cars were able to drive on the pavements, much to the amusement and surprisingly admiration of pedestrians.

The cars from the UK joined us here. They had their problems. The crossing was rough and some were sea sick, sea legs proved difficult to lose. With a slight detour around Santander,

Heather, Kevin, John and Keith were grateful to reach the hotel. Ray, who had to arrive in his 'tin-top' due to M.O.T. problems, sailed into Bilbao before travelling onward. Now our group was complete.

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The UK group consisting of myself (John Rowe), Kevin and Heather Ashton driving Blackjack Avions and Keith Walker in his trusty Lomax 223 (with 'our' spare tyre) arrived at Plymouth ferry port.

After an overnight sailing we arrived in sunny Spain at Santander, got lost again trying to leave the city without using motorways, all our sat nav's just didn't seem to work. The drive to Logroño was over some steep mountains with sharp hair pin bends and real drivers roads.

This was going to be our first hotel and this is where we met the rest of the travellers. In this group there were five Burtons, two Le Patrons, a BRA and a 'tintop'.

Access to the hotel was interesting as the road was closed due to drainage works, but this small matter didn't stop us and that's why there are pavements. All the locals seemed to approve! ☺

Logroño is the capital of the Rioja region and has 65 tapas bars, our hotel was in walking distance!

San Millan de Cogolla, was our next destination and only an hour's drive away. Hosteria del Monasterio de San Millan was our luxury stop, absolutely delightful.

The receptionist arranged for us all to park in part of the monastery usually kept for visiting dignitaries, which of course we were, making our cars safe whilst proving to be an excellent photogenic site.

Our group were invited to the garage of Ignacio Lejarraga. Ignacio used to have a large collection with a sample of any car manufactured in Spain in the seventies, Spanish makes as well as cars built under licensed agreement

These ranged from Citroën to Renault - under the name of Fasa - including Fiat with Seat, Simca, BMW and its Gogomobil, Land Rover with Santana.

Unfortunately, he couldn't keep his collection due to maintenance costs and rather than leaving it to rot he sold all the cars, except one, a Seat 600, plus a few kept in the junk yard at the back. But being a mechanic at heart, he has kept and still runs a few engines in the former showroom turned into a workshop.

Amongst these, a 2CV engine really running on just one cylinder, a Simca 1100cc, a Fiat 1600cc, a scooter engine as well, a Solex,... amongst others! At the end of the tour with this enthusiast, he couldn't resist making us leave in a puff of smoke, starting a vintage lorry diesel engine when we passed through the door.



The ladies in our group managed to miss the entertainment and enjoyed a meander along the river and through this small town.

We had planned a trip through some difficult mountain passes, which were close by, but unfortunately due to the extreme heat, dryness and fire risk we were not allowed. Instead we set off late morning for a leisurely, scenic, drive. Ignacio joined Jacques in his 'Le Patron', which was extremely helpful, he directed us to the source of food for our picnic and to a delightful shaded area, carpeted in mountain crocus, to partake our picnic. Ignacio also filmed the journey.

The small village of Fresneda de la Sierra were having a street party - interrupted by our cavalcade! The whoops of jubilation and the sounding of our horns just added to the delight of our day, and I am sure to their amusement.

We found this throughout our trip, we were always greeted with enthusiasm.

It was with sadness that we left the luxury of Monastery but this day we wouldn't have missed!

It started badly with our car taking the lead and getting lost, we couldn't get off of the dreaded motorway which we had avidly planned to avoid. The rest of our group had found the correct way, we found ourselves alone and sadly bereft of their company. Finally meeting

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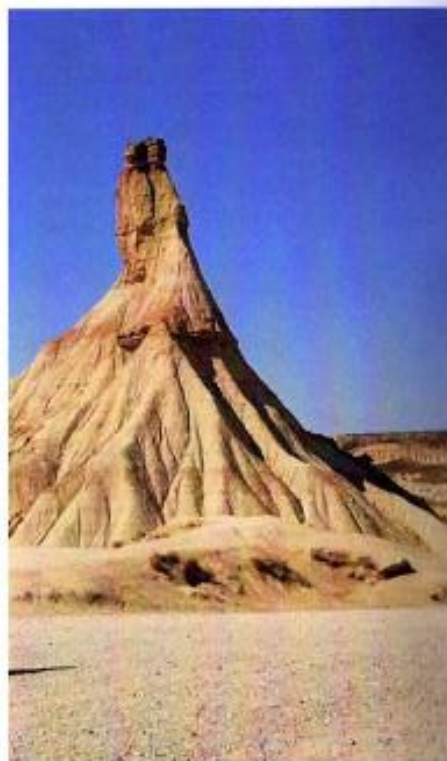
up at Toledo, where we filled the tanks of the cars and then our bellies.



With trepidation we slowly entered the Bardenas Reales desert, believed to be the largest desert in Europe, only 78k from the Pyrenees. We were met with an astonishing landscape, an inhospitable almost lunar aspect. Ravines, plateaus and curious shapes – the results of water and rain erosion taking their toll over millions of years.

It used to be home to crocodiles and turtles. We didn't see a living thing in this sizzling barren desert!

The fairy chimney of Castildetierra can be seen in a Spaghetti Western film or two. Much to our dismay Clint Eastwood was not there to greet us!



Pierre had visited the region before and he led us through the La Bardena Blanca. It didn't take us long to leave the tarmac road onto the rutted tracks that lead you through the desert.

For the three wheelers amongst us the tracks were doubly difficult, you could just about miss the rut with the two front wheels but the back wheel surely found its way into the deepest of furrows. Every piece of the car was shaken, many a nut and bolt were loosened. Mud guards came adrift. Sand entered into every bit of the car.



This all sounds horrific but believe me it was the ride of a lifetime, possibly not to be taken again!

Sos del Rey Católico, was our next stop, in Aragón, where we enjoyed a much needed aperitif on the hotel's balcony which overlooked the caramel coloured architecture of this small hill top town. The view was exceptional!

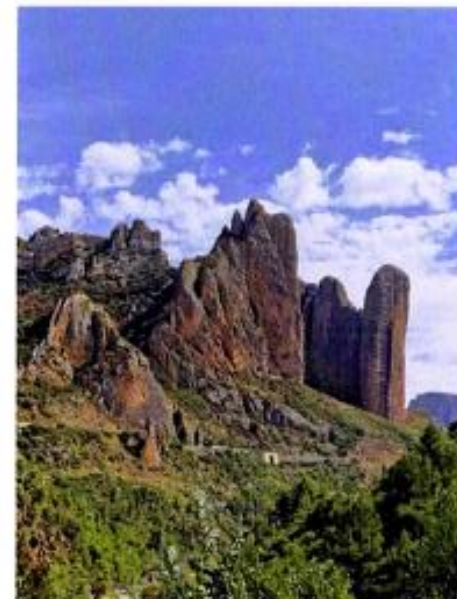
The next morning the ladies strolled, or should I say hiked our way through the steep streets of the town.

The men tried to get most of the sand out of their cars. Giving them a quick wash down at the same time.

We left late morning having fortified ourselves with provisions for the picnic.

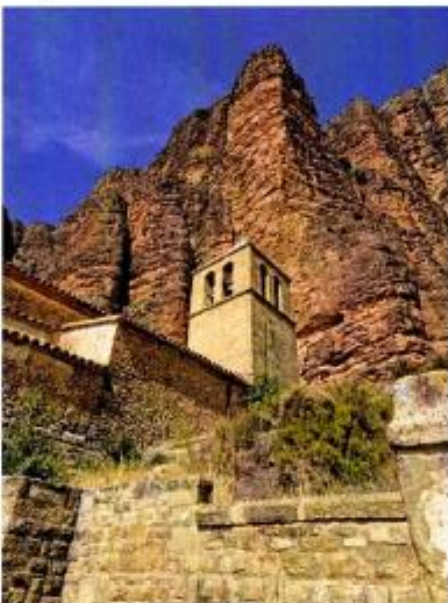
The drive once again was amazing, and our picnic was again taken amongst a carpet of mountain crocus. We were heading for Mallos de Riglos. The rock formation, el Paredón de los Buitres "the wall of the vultures" where vultures nests clung to the crevasses were a sight to behold. A legend says that a giant witch lived there, her appearance and size frightened the neighbours so she raised

size frightened the neighbours so she raised



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a huge rock and hid from everyone. Something must be believed because these huge rocks springing up from nowhere were a sight to behold.



Next hotel was in the town of Jaca where we were to spend two nights. We arrived there fairly late and the car park was full. To park in the busy road was not something we relished. After much discussion with the receptionist it was decided the garage could be opened for us at a cost of 10 euros each, we would have paid double just to keep the cars safe.

The town was a fair size, with a citadel worthy of a visit, which some of us took advantage of and others went for a drive. Unfortunately here was our only accident, person not car! Nathalie slipped in the

shower and hit her head and the same time breaking bones in her wrist, which was found out after her trip to the hospital where she was attended to immediately. With stitches to her head and wrist encased in plaster she continued our trip without complaint. Knowing that she had a long trip back to Luxembourg her fortitude was remarkable.

When we left the hotel we were told there wasn't a charge for the garage, the number of photographs taken I think more than compensated.

Our last two nights as a group were to be spent high in the Pyrenees. On our way there



we stopped at a viaduct built to take trains into the grand station of Canfranc. The road to the viaduct loosened the rest of the nuts and bolts and mud guards which had stood the test of time up till now.

Our picnic was taken beneath the 29 arches of Puente de Cenarbe, which marched across the valley. An easier way was found to return to the main road leading to Canfranc Estation.

The station of Canfranc is magnificent. Building began in 1912 but was interrupted by the First World War. Eventually opened in 1928 only to be closed again in the Spanish

Civil War. This station was the main railway link between France and Spain, when built it was the second biggest station in Europe.

It was used during the Second World War as an escape route into Spain for both Jews and Allied soldiers alike the resistance movement also had a strong hold here. When the war ended many German soldiers took this route as an escape, many with ill-gotten gains.

This ill-fated trans-Pyrenean railway closed after a bridge was destroyed on the French side.

From dreams of grandeur through its eventful lifetime and its demise the Canfranc station bears witness to the darkest hours. Now its resurrection is almost complete as a 250 bedroomed luxury hotel.

The actual station building remains the same just the interior is massively changed. The old shunting yard and sheds at the back are still in place as is an old carriage.

We stayed for two nights close-by. Our spa hotel sat amidst the mountains.

The next day some went for a drive, some for a shorter drive followed by a walk and some like ourselves took full advantage of the Spa, relaxing before the journey home.

When we tried to pay for this hotel the following day we were informed that the bill had been paid. A gift to us for organising the trip from Heather and Kevin, Patricia and Thierry, Francis, Michele and Pierre, Francoise and Dominique, Nathalie and

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Silviu, Ray, Juliette and Olivier, Joss and Jean-Paul, John, Keith, Jacques. A gesture that will never be forgotten.

From here we went our different ways. Some stopping for a BBQ, others making their way home in different directions. Some continued to 'Racing around the Ramparts' in Angoulême.

A holiday to be remembered and cherished.

Next day the group went into the Pyrenees and up Lescun, a very pretty small village. After, we drove on to Accous, which is a pass between France and Spain. This pass was used by the Jews escaping the Nazis in the 2nd World War.

The following day the organisers arranged a trip heading towards the next hotel. This included a large off-road

section which was hard on all our cars but we all made it unscathed apart from some dents in the petrol tanks. This was the day most of the group made their way back home.

The English contingent, plus a few French friends headed on up to Saint-Yrieix, Angoulême and on the way we stopped for lunch at colleague of one of the guys in a Burton.

The reason for heading to Angoulême was the annual 'Circuits des Remparts'. On the Saturday there is an organised classic run in the vineyard countryside around Angoulême - 120 miles. So many classic cars on the route and the locals clapped and cheered as everyone passed. We luckily managed to meet up with a French owned Blachjack Zero and Avions.

Sunday is when Angoulême comes alive with racing in the streets.

There's everything including Austin 7 racers, Bugatti's and modern classics, plus so much more. In the town itself there are rows of classic cars on display.

We were heading back towards Roscoff, stopping in Nantes at a Formula 1 with the WC and shower in the



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grease got onto the brakes. The guys with Burtons all took different spares and a selection of tools and the problem was soon sorted. Personally, I had/have a loose wire to the ignition which gave excitement to the cars following with spectacular backfiring, black smoke and flames from the exhaust. But that was it!

Apart from some rain in the Pyrenees the weather was superb for the whole time with blue skies and sunshine.

The European members of the group were all very generous, friendly, helpful and extremely funny! Thanks go to Lilian for arranging the hotels and John for the routes.

John Rowe

corridor! The day before we left France, we visited a couple with a 2CV who have lived in France for 20 years.

The following morning, we drove the last 30 miles to the port of Roscoff, at 6:00 am, in the dark, with fog at what seemed well below 10 degrees!

We did between 1,400 and 1,500 miles. I know some of you may ask... did we have any breakdowns? Well yes, one member had an inner driveshaft boot split and some

